

"Oldham is my town but Leeds is my City!" Kevin Sinfield MBE has said this on so many occasions since the turn of the Millennium.

Handed the Leeds Rhinos Captaincy at the tender age of 21 his mane has been synonymous with the 'Golden Generation' success since 2004 to the present day. Six Super League Championships. Two Challenge Cup victories. Two league leaders shields. Three World Club Championships.

Lance Todd and Harry Sunserland (twice) Man of the Match awards and crowned the World's best player in 2013. His Rugby League success for himself, the Rhinos, and the city of Leeds is ample justification for this great city to bestow suitable recognition on the man the fans affectionately call 'Sir Kev'.

Anyone who knows Kevin, in large or small part, knows there is a lot more to his character than just his Rugby League talent and success. He is the consummate professional whose application to the game he loves has resulted in the success he has enjoyed. A born leader he is admired around the world utilising a style that works on evolution rather than revolution. A very intelligent man he has combined his professional athlete role with raising a family and eventually securing a Masters degree from Leeds Beckett University.

On the 9th October 2011, the day after achieving the fifth Super League title, The Editorial in the Guardian newspaper said

" A great day for English rugby football, Saturday. No, not in New Zealand, where the England union team were humiliated by France, but at Manchester United's Old Trafford ground where, in a stirring, fiercely contested league grand final, largely unfavoured Leeds came from behind to defeat St Helens by 32 points to 16. A bleak day for a Lancashire side disrupted again, as they have been all season, by injuries, but a triumph on many levels for Leeds. For their coach, Brian McDermott, after a season where, as he said at the end, they have "been in places where it's not nice to be", apparently doomed at some points not even to make the play-offs. For the tiny, scuttling Rob Burrow, no longer first-choice scrum half, not even employed for the first 20 minutes here but, as often before, emerging as the most explosive of super-subbs and winning, by 37 votes out of 37, the man of the match award. But perhaps, most of all, for Kevin Sinfield, the long-serving captain, without whom it's hard to imagine that Leeds would have been there at all. His generalship, masterful tactical kicking and expertise with penalty and conversion sustained them throughout this season, as for many before. This is a player admired off the pitch for his modest, courteous decency. He has never quite made it at international level, but few players in the history of the game can have given more to the team that they served. In this age of Rooney and Tevez, here is a genuine, through and through sporting hero."

The last sentence maybe summing up the aura of Kevin Sinfield better than most. If he were a professional footballer his name would be bigger than Beckham, in American Football his contract would be worth hundreds of millions of dollars, yet he stuck with the game he loves at the club he loves in his words "doing a hard days work as I am basically a working man for a decent wage".

It is impossible to quantify the added value that Kevin has brought to the city of Leeds. He is a true role model, inspirational speaker, supporter of many charities, a marketing brand in himself yet readily associated to Leeds, thoughtful, conscientious and generous. When approached recently to front a partnership campaign around issues of violence against women obviously he was willing to be involved. But Kevin then went on to ask very insightful questions so as to understand the topic fully therefore making himself far better equipped to carry out his support.

At the end of this Super League season Kevin draws a close on his Rugby League career with the Leeds Rhinos which started as a youngster. Through that time his name is etched into the history of a remarkable period of success for club and city and as he embarks on a new challenge in Rugby Union it is fitting that he is duly recognised for his unrivalled contribution.